

Ateneo de Manila University

**Archium Ateneo**

---

English Faculty Publications

English Department

---

5-8-2010

## "The Long and Short of It" and "RSVP"

Mark Anthony Cayanan

Follow this and additional works at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/english-faculty-pubs>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

---

# Two poems by Mark Anthony Cayanan

## RSVP

Should you find yourself unable to contain your curiosity, or have nothing more to do, you may want to consider dropping by where I am.	this to her sister, who can be seen rushing off to the nearest high school at 6 AM. She screams this to her absent husband, who doesn't love her enough to bring her along to Australia. Sometimes the drunk lurching back home pauses for a duet; she outbellows him
The best time to go is 5:30 AM, just when I'm getting ready for the day and needing a reason to delay it. More importantly, right across my flat is a woman who everyday at this time knows how her life could have been better. She screams this to her mother, usually found with her back to the open windows, right beside the Christmas tree lit up all year round. She screams	for this transgression. If you fear reprimand, you can peek through the curtains, always drawn to give the impression of disuse. This map will show you how to get to me, so easily accessible from all points in the city. Here, too, is my address:

## THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

I am half-sick of shadows	the unskilled vocals of the habitual drunk, its ready audience—was gripped by the tentacles of her mind; she let flounce bolts of fabric over her house: her mind a skirt hemming in street, city, her image above it, checking its folds. Emboldened, she swooped back down, confronted the mirror: in it the surface of what was meant for her. Certainly, some meaning: to put an end to this trend. She stepped out; the world proved her wrong, which proved her suspicions.
Alfred, Lord Tennyson	
What forced her into detainment—sickness, indolence, need—had its symptoms: fear, and the desire to disobey it. She had felt she could wait no longer so often until there was only time, bereft of misgivings. Whenever someone or other befell her, her home, she loved each of them as well as she should; she was after all by herself with them. But most days she spent just listening, listening, until every sound—the cat's nocturnal mewling, the neighbor's, which preceded prayers,	The problem began when slowly she found her imagination had not failed her enough.

nowhere to be found and the bailiff was still struggling to get his gun out of its holster. Amidst the panic, Lucio could hear frantic shuffling a few feet away from him. It was a pathetic sight—Jose was struggling to get back up on his feet but was failing miserably. He kept slipping on the marble and he probably fractured a few bones in the process.

"Poor little thing," the armed man crooned. "Thanks for the pre-nup, by the way."

*BLAM.*

Right behind the head at point blank distance. Huge chunks of Jose's brains were scattered about like some misunderstood modern art. It looked amazing to Lucio and he couldn't get over how the two siblings make such amazing floor adornments with their heads blasted into bits. Pride filled the soul of this artist as he took time to appreciate his work. He was silently basking in his glory until a soft whimpering interrupted the mute applause.

"P-p-put y-yo-your gun down!"

The bailiff was still reeling from shock and he still couldn't get the gun out its holster. His hands scrambled faster to get the gun out, but sheer panic gave each of his fingers a mind of its own. Lucio ca-

sually walked towards the frightened mess and lifted the gun into the air. With a resounding crack, iron met bone and the bailiff fell down unconscious.

Lucio was alone now, at least for a while. The sunlight illuminated the scene with macabre gaiety, a sentiment akin to knowing that underneath the porcelain bodies of the carousel horses were real horse skeletons. He put his free hand into his pocket and felt a crisp crackling and he suddenly remembered what he really did this for. He had to do it now before the police arrive. His imagination could already hear the sirens from far.

He took the torn-out sheets of paper from his pocket and unfolded them. It was the list of expenses that he had made earlier in the wee hours of the morning. Spatters of blood from his hand stained the already soiled page. He put his gun down on the table and took out a pen from his other pocket. Shuffling through the papers, he looked for the last page. When he found it, he sat on the chair behind the plaintiff's table. "Excuse me, dear," he whispered as he kicked Dolores's body out of the way.

He placed the sheets on the table and flattened them out with his clean hand. He then uncapped

the pen and started writing his last entry.

*Debit: Dolores. Don't bother in writing that superficial amount.*

*Credit:*

Credit what? And he thought about this for a while: Debit, Credit, and how one balances out the other. What could be equivalent to a Dolores? Then he took a guess.

*Credit: L. u. c. i. o.*

It all made perfect sense. There was nothing else that could really be worth a Dolores...except...except a Lucio. This epiphany astonished him that all he needed to extinguish his Dolores was a Lucio. No, wait, he meant liabilities. Wait, no, he changed that to Dolores. Oh, it didn't matter anymore. He was happy, and that was all he needed.

"This calls for celebration," he mumbled. He picked up his gun and wobbled his way towards the center of the courtroom. He turned around and faced all that he had wrought: the empty audience, the dead siblings, the unconscious bailiff.

As the sirens came careening through the street, Lucio fired a celebratory shot.

Into his temple. \*